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From the Trenton Emporium.

THE BLASTED TREE.

Mark'd the broad and blasted oak,
Scorch'd by the lightning's livid glare;
Hollow its stem from branch to root,
And all its shrivell'd arms were bare.

It was a piercing night in winter, and along the rounded hills towards Clinton meadows, below Aylesbury, the moonlight sparkled on the bright and thickly crusted snows with peculiar splendor. Far off, the faint but perpetual roar of the icy river was heard, and the dark forests beyond it were dimly seen in the distance, like a heavy cloud in the western horizon. The intermediate country presented only a few solitary trees, and save that here and there a rugged group of overgrown shrubbery was seen above the snows, one wide and vast uncultivated waste appeared. It was a night in which the fancy of an honest German could not fail to conjure up a thousand phantoms; his shrieking ghosts cried from the crevices of every sapless tree; his witches rode on the pale moonlight beams in the distant and scarcely perceptible mist that spread a thin veil over the beautiful stars; and the wandering spirits of departed friends peeped like premature resurrectionists from behind every thicket. The hour of eleven had drawn nigh, & the watchful family that inhabited the crazy cabin on the borders of this barren country had extinguished their blazing pine lights, buried up their fires, and sprinkled over the smoking ashes the spoonful of salt, the magic virtues of which dispersed the ghostly train, and ensured them a peaceful rest, when two travellers passed along the broken road that leads from the village towards the ford above the falls. One bore the appearance of an old man, infirm with age; his broad brimmed hat hid his face, but some thin, grey locks waved around his shoulders, and he leaned forward on his jaded horse like one suffering with fatigue or decrepitude, behind him was the appendage of a stranger, a large black portmanteau, which swelled with the treasure it contained. The other was an athletic young man, whom the good people distinguished to be a hardy woodman, who sometimes acted as a guide to travellers, and sometimes, for he had some science, run out patented lands, and was, withal, better acquainted with the country than any man in it. He led the man's horse sometimes and sometimes ran before to break the road.

The cottagers thought they discovered traits of mystery in this; and as every thing that partook of mystery boded mischief according to their conceptions, they followed the midnight travellers across the barrens with their eyes, until they disappeared, and then lay several anxious hours dreaming of murder and robbery, and blood. More than once they thought they heard the piercing cry of

despair, mingled with the roar of the waterfall; and more than once discovered symptoms in the dusky room that spoke death without.

But the woodman was in the village before sunrise; he repeated that he had put the stranger safely across the ford, and left him to pursue his journey. Suspicion was hushed for the moment, for the character of the young man was good: the traveller was known to have money, but he had been called down the river on business of such urgent importance, that it was necessary for him to reach the lower ford that night, and he had with difficulty prevailed on Hurlbut to accompany him to western road. Who the stranger was, none knew, and thus far all was fair. But he never reached the ford, and no trace was heard of him from that night. Suspicion was once more awakened, & Hurlbut maintained, when questioned on the subject, a guarded and scornful silence. The fortune tellers were consulted, and they attested the woodman. Signs were attended to with all the formality of judicial inquiry, and even these condemned the unfortunate young man.

When spring came, it was discovered that a large oak tree, celebrated for its age and majesty, did not put forth a leaf. It grew near a by road which led to the river below the falls; & as no other cause could be assigned for its blighted appearance, it was attributed to one which now met the popular suspicion among the Germans. They called it the blasted tree; and located the place where the stranger's blood was shed beneath its branches. Withered by the hot breath of murder, they declared it would bloom again whenever the murderer should be brought to justice, and his blood sprinkled on its dry roots.

Five years had passed away, and old impression and vague suspicions grew stronger as years departed. Hurlbut was now surrounded by a young and dependent family, but superstition had fixed an indelible mark on his character, and he was followed by the eye of jealousy, which watched his actions, his countenance, and his words, while it shunned his association. The man became restless and unhappy; he felt sensibly the weight of a sullied reputation, and though he had disregarded it or many years, he began to sink under its influence into moroseness and disquietude.

About this time, some huntsmen, in the pursuit of game which had sheltered in the blasted tree, cut it down, and lo! from the trunk fell the withered bones of a human being; they were examined by an anatomist, and were declared to be the perfect parts of the skeleton of a man, whom he judged might have been placed there 4 or 5 years before. An opening in the trunk, some distance from the ground confirmed the probability of the story. The Germans and their neighbors caught it up eagerly, and the fate of the unfortunate woodman seemed fixed. He fled the storm he saw gathering; but in a month returned and surrendered himself up for trial.

The excitement of the populace ran high and as the day fixed for his trial drew near, the hopes of his acquittal vanished. The mass of the people were sure of his guilt, and they collected the evidence against him with an activity and zeal which seoured rather of the spirit of bitter persecution than of a love of justice. Leave the reader to imagine for himself the feelings of a tender wife, and six destitute little children, as they looked forward through the gathering cloud to the day that was to fix his destiny, while I hasten to the crowded court-room, and the solemn arraignment of the husband and father for the crime of murder.

The prisoner stood pale and dejected, but silent and resigned, at the bar, and answered with a calm and steady voice, "Not Guilty," to the charge. He was asked if he had counsel. He answered in the negative and requested that assistance might be assigned him. The judge cast his eyes around the court, as

if carelessly in search of some one, on whom to lay what, as his manner seemed to indicate, he thought a hopeless task, when an old gentleman, whose presence amid the throng had not been noticed, rose and introduced himself as Mr. —, an eminent lawyer of the city. The court bowed respectfully, and a look of astonishment was visible on every face when he asked the privilege of acting as the defendant's counsel.

It was granted, however, unhesitatingly, and he resumed his seat. When the witnesses had been heard on the side of the prosecution, he rose and addressed the court. He recollected the prisoner; he remembered, that on the night on which the evidence went to fix the murder, he had employed the prisoner in the capacity of a guide, and was conducted by him over the ford; that he missed his way, and did not reach the lower ford to which he intended to go, but travelled by another way to the city. In regard to the bones found, he had two evidences to prove, he said, that the very physician who pronounced them human and of five year's decay, and who was a bitter enemy of the defendant, had placed them there himself; that they had for many years before decked a corner of his study. The first was a boy who assisted in placing them there, and the second was the aperture in the tree itself, which at the entrance was not more than five inches in diameter, and utterly incapable of admitting a human body. He sat down under acclamations of astonishment: the proof went on, the defendant was acquitted without an argument, and the corrupt and revengeful physician just escaped from the village time enough to save his neck.

This is the story of the blasted tree. It is a moral. How dangerous is superstition! how carefully should circumstantial evidence be examined, and how cautiously weighed! how false and how deceptive the idea, that what is generally believed is infallibly the right!

BRADDOCK'S FIELD.

Nine miles above Pittsburgh, and immediately upon the bank of the Monongahela river, is the celebrated battle ground called "Braddock's Field." It is famous for the destruction of an army intended to capture Fort Duquesne, crush the extending power of Frances, and control the Indians on our western border. Here Washington fought and Braddock fell. On this spot fifty Frenchmen and 250 Indians destroyed the forty-ninth & fifty-first regiments of British regulars, though aided by a number of provincial troops. The battle was fought on the afternoon of the 9th July, 1765. Seventy years have passed away, and the crumbling bones of men and horses are seen in every field for a mile in extent. For many years they were shrouded by a mourning wilderness of shadowy woods, but this has yielded to the busy axe, and the plough annually driven amongst the skulls of the slain and the bones of the brave. Rich harvest wave over fields fertilized by the blood and bodies of a thousand unburied men. The partridges whistle and the reaper sings on the spot where the cries of mortal anguish told the dread revelry of battle. 'Twas here the wild whoop of fierce savage quelled the rallying cry of Europe's warriors. 'Twas here that they drove the ruthless tomahawk deep in the crushed skull of the vanquished, and with yelling joy tore the scalp from the head of the feeble and the wounded, the dead and the dying.

The retreating survivors carried their wounded general with them until he died. He was buried about 40 miles from the battle ground in the centre of the road as advancing army had cut. To prevent the discovery of this, soldiers, horses and waggons were passed over it, to save the body savage dishonor, by thus concealing the trace of its interment. Some of Braddock's affectionate soldiers so marked the trees near the spot where he was laid, that the recollections of those who visited the west many years after could point to the exact place of his interment, now emphatically termed Braddock's grave. It is close to the northern side of the national road seven miles east of Uniontown.

It has been rumored for an early period, that Braddock had been shot by his men. More recently it has been stated by one who could not be mistaken, that in the course of the battle, Braddock ordered the provincial troops to form a column. They, however, adhered to the Indian mode of firing severally from the shelter of the trees. Braddock in his vexation, rode up to a young man by the name of Fawcett, & with his sword rashly cut him down. Thomas Fawcett, a brother of the killed, soon learned his fate, and watching his opportunity, revenged his brother's blood, by shooting Braddock through the body, of which wound he died. Thomas Fawcett is now or was lately, living near Laurel Hill. He is now 97 years of age.

From the Trenton Emporium.

I DIDN'T THINK.

A sprightly little girl who occasionally entertains me with her prattle, has often amused me by the readiness with which to every chance of misconduct, she furnishes this brief excuse. She erred always through inadvertency—*She didn't think*. It is a child's excuse—but how many of us are children in this particular.

Close and habitual thinking is the foundation of all prosperity. There is no business no pursuit; no situation in life, that does not require this constant operation of the mind—whatever is thoughtlessly done is ill done. A little observation will convince any man that a well regulated, close calculating man is seldom found on the shady side of the hill. While a great many of these whom misfortune had overtaken have done things for which the only excuse they can offer is—*They didn't think*.

We had once a friend—a tolerably sensible sort of a man, one who took the world very easy, and made himself as happy as possible. He was a merchant with a good capital and good credit. He bought largely, trusted freely, seldom troubled his debtors, and detested dunning—his great object seemed to be to sell. But his creditors troubled him. And when his business came to be closed, it seemed wonderful that a man of so much sense, should have travelled so directly to poverty. How did you expect, said one of his creditors to him, to ever pay your debts, when you never looked after your dues—when you did so wide a business? Ah said he, *I didn't think*.

He never recollected that to sell was the smallest part of a trader's business. All are not fools that do foolish things—the wisest men are sometimes caught in the silliest acts, simply for want of proper reflection.

Of that class of men who are in the habit of getting their wisdom by experience, the great majority make this mistake—*they didn't think*—and their misfortune are traced to this source. A single thoughtless moment is sometimes fatal. I have known a fine fortune ruined by a simple endorsement, the work of less than a minute; a house burned by carelessly snuffing a candle; a life of embarrassment produced by a bargain, made in a few moments at a casual meeting. And ruin comes oftener this way than by shipwreck, or the torch of an incendiary, or the changes of time.

What gray headed man has looked from the last stage of life over the history of his earlier times, and recollected no losses occasioned by thoughtlessness. It is the language of every man—language which you daily and hourly hear. In this and that transaction, I might have done better—but I didn't think.

Slanderers.—Vice hath not a more abject slave; society produces not a more odious vermin; nor can the devil receive a guest more worthy of him, nor possibly more welcome to him, than a slanderer. That person whose fiend like disposition would lead him to defame the female character, is a fit subject for "treason, stratagem & strife"; and Shakespeare has truly remarked, "That he who steals my purse, steals trash;" but that "he who filches from me my good name, robs me of that which not enriches him, but makes me poor indeed."

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